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UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education

Report on the seventh meeting held in New York on 17–18 June 1999

Summary

The present report contains the recommendations of the seventh meeting of the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education of the Executive Boards of UNICEF and UNESCO, which was held in New York on 17–18 June 1999.

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1. In his introductory remarks, the outgoing chairperson of the Joint Committee on Education (JCE), H.E. Ibrahim A. Gambari (UNICEF), noted that many of the promises of the World Conference on Education for All (EFA), held at Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, had not been fulfilled and that there were new challenges for education at the approach of the new millennium.

2. The meeting elected H.E. David Stanton (UNESCO) as chairperson, and H.E. Makaminan Makagiansar (UNESCO) and H.E. Mohamed El-Amine Souef (UNICEF) as rapporteurs.

3. In his opening remarks, the Chairperson referred to the injunction of the United Nations Secretary-General for United Nations agencies to work more closely together as a family. The Executive Director of UNICEF mentioned the role of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework as providing a basis for collaboration and greater coherence in performance at the country level. The Deputy Director-General of UNESCO remarked that there was considerable strength and added value to be derived from the unity of purpose of the two organizations collaborating in the areas where their mandates converge.

4. Discussions at the meeting began with a report on progress since the last meeting in Bucharest in May 1997. The Joint Committee then considered a presentation on the recently signed "Framework Agreement between UNESCO and UNICEF on collaboration in the field of education" (February 1999). This was followed by an in-depth discussion of potential areas for collaboration in the field of early childhood care and development. The Joint Committee also reviewed a report on the intensive collaboration between the two organizations in support of the EFA 2000 Assessment.

5. There were a number of recurrent themes in the discussion:

(a) The primary importance to both organizations of girls' education;

(b) The respective roles and responsibilities of the two organizations with respect to education in emergency situations (Kosovo, Sierra Leone, etc.);

(c) The importance of policy-relevant education data, especially with regard to the measurement of learning achievement and other qualitative issues;

(d) The need for a continued focus on education in Africa;

(e) The importance of a results-orientation and reporting on the impact of collaboration;

(f) Elaboration of the respective strengths and mandates of UNICEF and UNESCO.

Recommendations

6. Within this context, JCE approved the following recommendations:

(a) *Collaboration*: The two organizations should continue their constructive collaboration, and strengthen collaboration not only with state agencies, but also with civil society bodies and the private sector;

(b) *Areas of focus*:

(i) *Girls' education*: Both agencies should continue to place high priority on collaboration in the area of girls' education, building on the knowledge and experience gained over the past decade, and directing efforts particularly to systemic changes to ensure sustainability and impact;

(ii) *Early childhood care and education*: Collaboration in the area of early childhood care and education should promote an integrated comprehensive approach, taking into account especially the community and cultural context of which each child is a part. It is important to focus particularly on the development of indicators and on parent education programmes;

(iii) *Focus on Africa*: Going beyond the framework of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, and taking into account the Decade of Education in Africa, both organizations should explore possibilities for more intensive collaboration which addresses the learning needs of children marginalized or excluded by such factors as conflict, civil strife and HIV/AIDS;

(iv) *Status, remuneration and training of teachers*: The two agencies should realign their collaborative work with regard to teachers to better reflect the shared interest of the two organizations in the professional development of teachers and other professionals in education;

(v) *Education data and statistics*: UNESCO and UNICEF should seek to continue and intensify their collaboration on improving the quality and availability of education data and statistics, focusing particularly on policy-relevant, disaggregated data, and measurement of quality and learning achievement. This work should build on collaboration with the

UNESCO Institute of Statistics and regional networks already established, and promote greater capacity-building at the country level;

(vi) *EFA assessment*:

a. The two agencies should build on their successful and productive collaboration in this important initiative and strive actively to promote a renewed commitment to the EFA partnership on the part of the five convenors (United Nations Development Programme, UNESCO, United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the World Bank), the sponsors and other parties;

b. Recognizing the continued relevance of the Jomtien vision in the context of accelerated globalization, the knowledge revolution and changing resource constraints since 1990, the two agencies should jointly take the initiative, with other members of the EFA Forum, in ensuring the relevance of the new Year 2000 framework of action;

(c) *Strengths and mandates*: The Secretariats of both organizations should be requested to further elaborate what is set out in the Framework Agreement in regard to strengths and mandates of each organization, taking into account differing contexts, including post-conflict situations;

(d) *Reports to JCE*: Reports to JCE should provide more explicit assessment of the impact of collaboration at country and regional levels, a more results-oriented approach, and an analysis of the context and the progress achieved and challenges encountered.